

A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR EXHIBITED BY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The emerging economy will confront greater challenges of risk, uncertainty, innovation and experimentation. Organizations will need leaders who can manage shared efforts with a broad spectrum of diverse people in order to address problems and find solutions. The study is an endeavor to gauge the management student perception of leadership, their opinion about task and relationship orientation of leadership. Since these management students are going to be future leaders it is imperative that their insights on leadership are studied and used as an input for developing business strategies. The research was conducted with the help of a self constructed questionnaire based on the variables of task leadership, relationship leadership, conceptual skills, administrative skills and relationship skills. The findings of the research highlighted on the importance of relationship orientation of management students and significant links between various skills and relationship based leadership.

KEYWORDS: Task Leadership, Relationship Leadership, Conceptual Skills, Administrative Skills and Relationship Skills

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Leadership

“Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential”

Warren Bennis

Leadership is defined as organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal and should be essentially nurtured in every organization in order to accomplish certain goals. Good leadership potential is one that supports one's leadership ability to influence, motivate and direct others. It can be both, innate and acquired since it is based largely on how one behaves towards others in the simplest and most ordinary situations. A good leader is an asset for an organization and can bring a wave of change with his capability and commitment. Leaders produce the necessary results which are aligned with the mission and goals of the organizations with maintaining trust and good relationships between the people who are involved in producing those results. Integrity, vision, communication, teamwork, decision-making, planning, coaching are a few qualities of a good leader.

The workplace landscape has been ever evolving but the modern day employees wish to achieve a lot more than monetary gains. They yearn for much more, they want to feel significant, stimulated and challenged. Effective leadership helps in building a positive environment which in turn creates a sense of belonging, an encouraging work culture and an

atmosphere of prosperity. They are far-sighted, passionate, spirited, astute, generous and trustworthy; they create organizations that are good to work in. They improve productivity and employee retention figures, because people look up to effective leaders.

Whether an organization is big or small, there are several traits a leader must possess; Integrity, honesty, strong internal guiding principles, trust, vision, commitment, communication, engagement of the team, build sustainable relationships, leverage the power of conflict, provide constructive feedback, are some possible outcomes of having potential leadership. The behavioral traits must be associated with the execution of decisions and accomplishment of organizational goals.

Leadership behavior not only directs but also motivates the employees of an organization. There are many leadership behaviors that can be used by a leader to lead his/ her team to achieve goals. Few of them are:

- **Autocratic (Dictatorial)**

Autocratic leader dictates what is to be achieved and how it will be achieved. The plan of action is build by the leader alone. Individual control, centralized decision making, one way communication are few characteristics of autocratic style.

- **Participative (Democratic)**

Participative leader works in consultation with their team when making decisions. It gives autonomy of idea generation. This style respects team motivation and utilizes the skills of individual team members to achieve goals.

- **Free Reign (Laissez Faire)**

Free reign leader allows the team to make decisions with little input or help. The team feels empowered. This style suits highly skilled and more mature teams.

- **Transformational**

Transformational leadership nurtures positive changes in those who follow them. They are energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. They believe in mentoring and create a learning environment.

- **Transactional**

Transactional leadership, also known as managerial leadership, focuses on the role of supervision, organization and group performance. Transactional leadership is often used in business; when employees are successful, they are rewarded; when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished.

Task-oriented (or task-focused) leadership is an approach of managing people and work where in the leader focuses on the tasks and responsibilities that need to be performed in order to meet certain performance standard. Task-oriented leaders are goal focused and are artful in delegating work. They will formulate all plans and strategies in order to find procedural solution required to meet specific goals. Since the objective of such leadership is to get the task done, it becomes imperative to monitor the progress at each step. The advantage is that it ensures that deadlines are met and jobs are accomplished well in time. However, under such leadership the team members have to suffer at the hand of a tough task master. It has the potential to ignore employee concerns and grievances which can lead to retention problems.

Relationship-oriented is an approach in which the priority is satisfaction and motivation of the team members which is in stark contrast to the task orientation. This style of leadership encourages good teamwork and collaboration, through fostering positive relationships and good communication. Time and effort are generously spent on building relationships and cohesive teams. The orientation vouches for care and concern for everyone and may incentivize interactions and group activities. Relationship-oriented leaders understand that building positive productivity requires a positive environment where individuals feel driven. The only downside is that the focus may detract from the actual tasks and goals at hand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature indicates that present leadership practices are mixed throughout various organizations. Early leadership research focused primarily on relatively objective and measurable characteristics such as intelligence, self-confidence, initiative and persistence (Stogdill, 1948) or masculinity, dominance, extraversion and conservatism (Mann, 1959). Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt (2002) found that extraversion is the factor most associated with leadership, followed by conscientiousness, openness and low neuroticism.

(Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Mazutis, 2007) elaborated on the newer theories of positive forms of leadership including authentic, spiritual, ethical and servant leadership. (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) defined an authentic leader as “confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders”. Similarly, (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996) defined ethical leaders as strong, virtuous, trustworthy, supportive and nurturing.

(Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008) demonstrated how leadership qualities can positively affect follower outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, (Collins, 2001) associated humility, character strength with the virtue of temperance, factor inherent in leaders whose organizations persistently generate positive returns. Character and leadership of self, or the cultivation of positive character strengths, is thus a critical domain of leadership.

Fyfe, et al. (1997), noted that present leadership resembled a military style of leadership. Silverstri (2007) agreed that there is minimal verification that leadership practices are in a transit phase. Most organizations persist to cultivate their centralized culture through the use of hierarchy and rank. Authority reminds officers that they are just subordinates and have a distinct place within the organizations, also that they function in a military culture. Silvestri (2007) emphasized that today’s leadership is unwilling to share information within the organizations and rarely allows others to participate in decision-making opportunities. Conversely, Wuestewald & Steinheider (2006) reported that leadership is progressively developing from an autocratic, centralized style that was based on wisdom, integrity and courage to that of one that embraces teamwork, involvement, and shared leadership. In such situations organizations become less supervisory and work bottom up. Steinheider & Wuestewald, (2008) said that “Modern administration is more about ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the force,”

Lussier & Achua (2004) elaborated on Leadership style as a combination of traits, skills, and behaviors. Marquis & Huston (2000) associated the Great Man Trait Theory with that of the Aristotelian philosophy, which indicated that leaders were born and not made and depending on the need a leader would surface. Murphy (2005) argued that leaders cannot be developed through their skills and education. Wright (1996) emphasized on the behavioral methodology centered

on the recognizable actions that made a person an effective leader. Lussier & Achua (2004) identified two more Styles of Leadership: job-centered (task) and employee-centered (people). The job-centered (task-initiating structure) behavior focuses on the leader taking control in order to get the job done and the employee-centered (people-consideration) behavior focuses on the leader meeting the needs of employees and developing relationships.

Fiedler (1967) explored the idea that there was not just one ultimate style of leadership for a given circumstance, but leaders would be more effective by varying their leadership style depending on the situations that faced them. Fiedler's Model based leadership styles on either being task or relationship oriented and the style use depended on whether the situation was one of leader-member relations, task structure or position power.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the leadership types and practices
- To study the task and relationship leadership behavior of management students
- To study the relationship between various skills (administrative, interpersonal, conceptual) and leadership behavior exhibited by management students.

The research has been carried out with the help of a self constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire had several items related to the perception of students regarding their leadership behavior with few other variables related to the study. The questionnaire had two parts, part A was focused on collecting demographic details and part B mapped the perception of respondents as regards leadership skills and leadership behavior. The questionnaire was constructed on a five point likert agreement scale to measure the responses on the decided variables. The questionnaire was subjected to review by experts and their inputs have been incorporated accordingly. Reliability of the same was computed to be Cronbach Alpha. 83. According to Nunnally (1978, p. 245) the instruments used in basic research have reliability of about .70 or better.

The universe for the study comprises higher education institutions in and around Delhi NCR. Random sampling was done for selection of respondents, and the questionnaire was administered to final year students of both undergraduate and postgraduate category of an institution. From each institution 15 undergraduate and 15 postgraduate respondents were chosen from 4 different institutions which made a total of 120 questionnaires. Out of 120 questionnaires 100 completed ones were considered. Also, related data has been collected and reviewed through websites, journals and magazines. The following hypotheses have been formulated in accordance with the given information.

H1: There is no relationship between Relationship oriented leadership and conceptual skills

H2: There is no relationship between Relationship oriented leadership and interpersonal skills

H3: There is no relationship between Relationship oriented leadership and administrative skills

H4: There is no relationship between Task oriented leadership and interpersonal skills

H5: There is no relationship between Task oriented leadership and administrative skills

H6: There is no relationship between Task oriented leadership and conceptual skills

The aim of this research is to examine the leadership behavior of management students. At the outset the descriptive statistics of management students regarding their perception about task and relationship oriented behavior is

discussed. The study analyses the relationship between various skills (administrative, interpersonal and conceptual) and leadership behavior exhibited by management students. The study tries to identify the correlates of skills with type of leadership behavior management students exhibit.

DATA ANALYSIS

Task and Relationship

Table 1

Questions	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1	Make a "to do" list of the things that need to be done.	100	3.7	1.267304465	1.606060606
2	Try to make the work fun for others.	100	3.9	1.077782984	1.161616162
3	Urge others to concentrate on the work at hand	100	3.89	1.1	1.21
4	Show concern for the personal well-being of others.	100	4.12	0.935063332	0.874343434
5	Set timelines for when the job needs to be done.	100	3.96	1.024152766	1.048888889
6	Help group members get along.	100	4.21	0.902241877	0.814040404
7	Keep a checklist of what has been accomplished.	100	4.02	0.93181695	0.868282828
8	Listen to the special needs of each group member.	100	4.11	0.827494698	0.684747475
9	Stress to others the rules and requirements for the project.	100	3.38	1.212560526	1.47030303
10	Spend time exploring other people's ideas for the project.	100	3.89	0.962897563	0.927171717

For the sake of measuring task and relationship behavior of management students, the given items were studied. The researchers summed the score for odd numbered statement to measure task score. In the same way, sum also the score for even numbered statement to measure relationship score. So by added mean value of question no. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 the total of 18.95 was arrived at i.e. task scores of management student. Also, by adding mean value of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, the researchers attained 20.23 i.e. relationship score. It was observed that the relationship score > task score, which leads to the conclusion that management students tend to be more people centric and would want to accomplish tasks through their people skills.

Correlations

Table 2: Correlates of Task Leadership and Various Skills

		Task Leadership Score	Skill_Administrative	Interpersonal Skill	Conceptual Skill
TASKLEADERSHIPSCORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.375**	.336**	.360**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.000
	N	101	101	101	101
SKILL_ADMINISTRATIVE	Pearson Correlation	.375**	1	.587**	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	101	101	101	101

Table 2: Contd.,

SKILL_INTERPERSONAL	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.587**	1	.668**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000
	N	101	101	101	101
SKILL_CONCEPTUAL	Pearson Correlation	.360**	.652**	.668**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	101	101	101	101
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Recent research used a four-skill model similar to Katz', which includes interpersonal, cognitive, business, and strategic skills. Results show that although interpersonal and cognitive skills were required more than business and strategic skills for those on the lower levels of management, as leaders climbed the career ladder, higher levels of all four of these leadership skills became necessary (Mumford, Campion & Morgeson, 2007). There is a strong positive correlation between Relationship oriented leadership and interpersonal skills ($r=.543$, $p<.01$), conceptual skills ($r=.648$, $p<.01$) and administrative skills ($r=.693$, $p<.01$). A high correlation between relationship oriented leadership and interpersonal skills signifies the relevance of these skills in effectively influencing superiors, peers and subordinates in the achievement of organizational goals. It's a proficiency in working with people.

The leaders who work with relationship orientation manage their professional affiliations well and value others' feelings too. Those leaders who are good at people skills know their teams well, are empathetic towards their team and hence create an environment of faith and motivation. These skills help them achieve the individual and organizational objectives on the strength of their relationships with employees.

Conceptual skills form the base of leadership effectiveness. They aid an individual to ideate, formulate and execute. These skills entail an in depth understanding of policies and principles. Relationship oriented leadership commands higher consideration of ability to work with abstract ideas so that they are able to make more sense for the people around them. The sheer relevance of these skills at senior levels is largely because of the number of people who look up to you for whom you are. While conceptual skills are less important at lower levels of management, to be promoted to higher levels of management, it is important to develop and demonstrate this skill at all levels of management (Yukl, 2006).

Also, the art of administration is a key component for successful leadership. There is a high correlation between administrative skills and relationship oriented leadership. It is said that people who believe in relationship building have a better administrative control compared to the more authoritarian leaders who command respect. It is characterized by involved support, friendship, and mutual trust. It is leadership that is democratic and employee oriented, rather than autocratic and production oriented. Mlsumi (1985) saw it as maintenance-oriented leadership behavior directed toward dispelling excessive tensions that arise in interpersonal relations within a group or organization, promoting the resolution of conflict and strife, giving encouragement and support, providing an opportunity for minority opinions to be expressed, inspiring personal need fulfillment and promoting an acceptance of interdependence among group members. Such an environment can promise an effective administration.

Hence, we reject hypothesis H1, H2, H3.

Table 3: Correlates of Relationship Leadership and Various Skills

		Leadership Skill_Administrative	Leadership Skill_Interpersonal Skill	Leadership Skill_Conceptual Skill	Relationship Leadership Score
LEADERSHIPSKILL_ADMINISTRATIVE	Pearson Correlation	1	.587**	.652**	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	101	101	101	101
LEADERSHIPSKILL_INTERPERSONALSKILL	Pearson Correlation	.587**	1	.668**	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	101	101	101	101
LEADERSHIPSKILL_CONCEPTUALSKILL	Pearson Correlation	.652**	.668**	1	.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	101	101	101	101
RELATIONSHIPLEADERSHIPSCORE	Pearson Correlation	.693**	.543**	.648**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	101	101	101	101
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

There is a positive correlation between Task oriented leadership and interpersonal skills ($r=.336$, $p<.01$), conceptual skills ($r=.360$, $p<.01$) and administrative skills ($r=.375$, $p<.01$). A low degree of correlation between task oriented leadership and other variables as compared to the case in relationship oriented leadership was observed. It explicitly shows that relationship oriented leadership works better than the model of task orientation.

Purely task-oriented leaders are likely to keep their distance psychologically from their followers and to be more cold and aloof (Blau & Scott, 1962) damaging the relationships with their subordinates. They initiate structure for their followers (Hemphill, 1950a), define the roles of others, explain what to do and why, establish well defined patterns of organization and channels of communication, and determine the ways to accomplish assignments (Hersey & Blanchard, 1981). Such leaders focus only on getting the job done and hence can be autocratic. They define both, work to be accomplished and job roles. They prepare a blueprint in order to execute the plan in a structural manner. They try and maintain high standards of performance. An attentive approach ensuring deadlines along with quality value addition is a mandate with such leaders. However, because task-oriented leaders are hard at thinking the team's well being, this approach can suffer many of the flaws of autocratic leadership, including causing motivation and retention problems. This could be the reason of a weak correlation between Task oriented leadership and administrative skills.

Hence, we reject hypothesis H4, H5, H6.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between task leadership and interpersonal skills ($r=.336$, $p<.01$), conceptual skills ($r=.360$, $p<.01$) and administrative skills ($r=.375$, $p<.01$) is weaker than the correlation between relationship oriented leadership and interpersonal skills ($r=.543$, $p<.01$), conceptual skills ($r=.648$, $p<.01$) and administrative skills ($r=.693$, $p<.01$). This shows that future managers will have more faith in relationship oriented leadership. The study divulged management students' perception of leadership and various skills put to use in business. It can be of use to the corporate for understanding the behavioral attributes of management students, for academicians in order to do an in depth analysis of various styles of leadership.

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